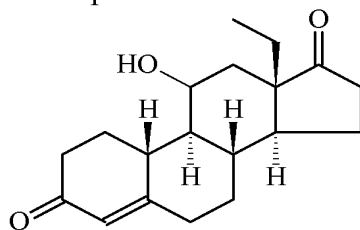


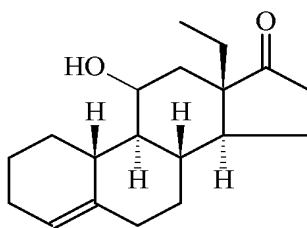
Amendments to the Claims

1. (Currently Amended) A process for the preparation of Desogestrel which comprises the regioselective reduction of the compound of formula



XIIa

to give the compound of formula



XIVa

2. (Original) A process according to claim 1 in which said reduction is performed in the presence of an alkaline borohydride, a strong organic acid and a C₁-C₃ organic acid.

3. (Original) A process according to claim 2 in which said borohydride is sodium borohydride, said strong organic acid is trifluoroacetic acid and said C₁-C₃ organic acid is acetic acid.

4. (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 2 in which said reduction is performed in an organic solvent selected among dichloromethane, tetrahydrofuran or diglyme; preferably dichloromethane.

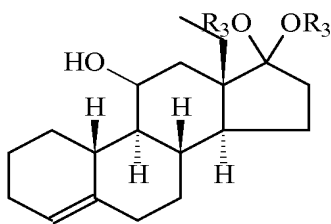
5. (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 2 in which the ratio between the moles of borohydride and the moles of compound XIIa is between 8 and 2, ~~preferably between 5.5 and 6.5.~~

6. (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 3 in which trifluoroacetic acid and acetic acid are used in a ratio by volume from 2:1 to 1:2, ~~preferably in a ratio by volume of 1:1.~~

7. (Original) A process according to claim 1 in which said reduction is performed with about 6 moles of sodium borohydride per mole of compound XIIa, trifluoroacetic acid and acetic acid in a ratio by volume of 1:1, in dichloromethane and at a temperature of reaction between 0°C and 25°C.

8. (Original) A process according to claim 1 which further comprises:

(b) the protection of the carbonyl group of the compound of formula XIVa to give the protected compound of formula

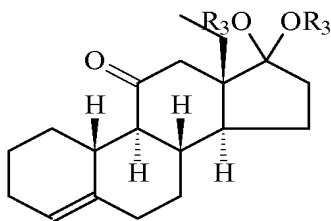


XV

in which

R₃ represents a C₁-C₅ alkyl group or the R₃ groups together represent a -(CH₂)_n- chain wherein n is an integer from 2 to 4, optionally substituted by one or more methyl groups;

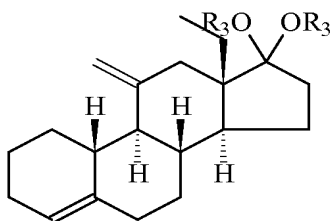
(c) the subsequent oxidation reaction of the protected compound of formula XV to give the compound of formula



XVI

in which R₃ has the above reported meanings;

(d) the subsequent olefination reaction of the compound of formula XVI to give the compound of formula



XVII

in which R₃ has the above reported meanings.

9. (Original) A process according to claim 8 in which the two R₃ groups together form a -(CH₂)_n- chain wherein n is equal to 3.

10. (Original) A process according to claim 8 in which the protection of the carbonyl group (b) is performed in the presence of 4-7 equivalents of 1,3-propandiol, of 2-4 moles of

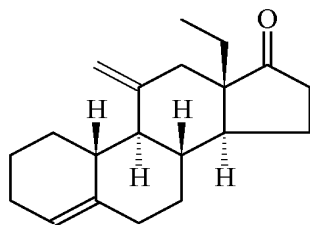
triethylorthoformate per mole of substrate XIVa and of p-toluensulfonic acid in a catalytic amount, at a temperature between 10 and 50°C, ~~preferably at about 40°C.~~

11. (Original) A process according to claim 8 in which the oxidation reaction (c) is performed with a chromium based oxidant selected among 10% chromic acid in 9/1 pyridine/water (Conforth's reagent), pyridinium chlorochromate and 4-dimethylaminopyridinium chlorochromate, in an organic solvent selected among dichloromethane or admixtures of dichloromethane and water, in the presence of a phase transfer, or pyridine, at a concentration of substrate XV between 0.05 and 0.2 molar and at a temperature between 0°C and 15°C.

12. (Original) A process according to claim 8 in which the olefination reaction (d) is performed by reaction with methyltriphenylphosphonium iodide or chloride, in a polar aprotic solvent or in an ether, in the presence of 1.1-1.5 moles of a strong base per mole of phosphonium salt, at a temperature between 40°C and 90°C.

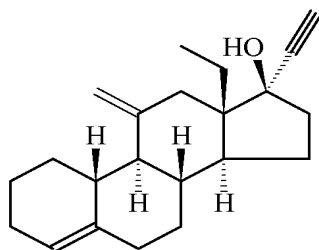
13. (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 8 which further comprises:

(e) the deprotection reaction of the compound of formula XVII to give the compound of formula



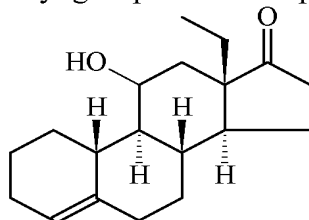
XVIII

(f) the subsequent ethinylation reaction at the 17 position of the compound of formula XVIII to give Desogestrel of formula



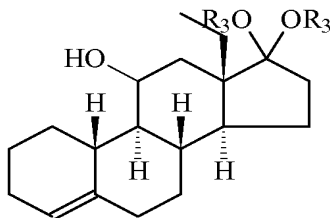
14. (Original) A process for the preparation of Desogestrel which comprises:

(b) the protection of the carbonyl group of the compound of formula



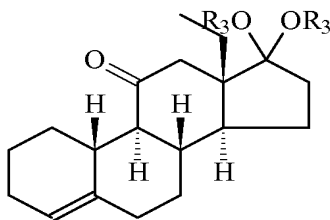
XIVa

Chemical structure XV is a steroid derivative. It features a four-ring steroid nucleus with a double bond at C5. A hydroxyl group (HO-) is attached to C3. At C13, there is a ketal group consisting of a central carbon atom bonded to two OR₃ groups and a methyl group (R₃). Stereochemistry is indicated with wedges and dashes: H at C10 is wedged, H at C13 is dashed, and H at C14 is wedged. The label 'XV' is positioned to the right of the structure.



in which

(c) the subsequent oxidation reaction of the protected compound of formula XV to give the compound of formula



in which R_3 has the above reported meanings;

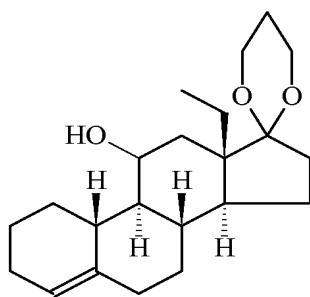
The chemical structure shows a steroid nucleus with a double bond in the A ring. Substituents are shown at the 3 and 14 positions: R_3O at C-3 and OR_3 at C-14. Stereochemistry is indicated with wedges and dashes at C-5, C-8, C-9, C-13, and C-14.

XVII

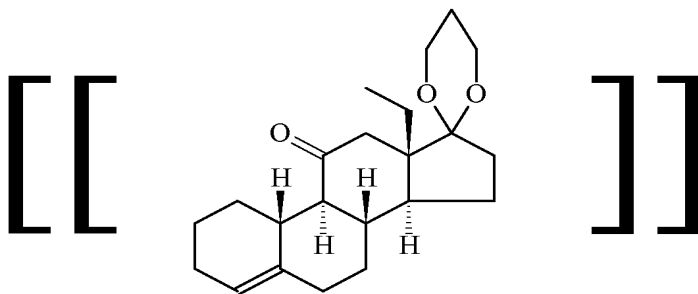
in which R_3 has the above reported meanings.

The chemical structure shows a steroid nucleus with a ketone group at C3 and a hydroxyl group at C14. The stereochemistry is indicated by wedges and dashes: H at C5 is wedged, H at C9 is dashed, H at C13 is dashed, and H at C14 is wedged. There is an ethyl group at C17 and a double bond between C5 and C6.

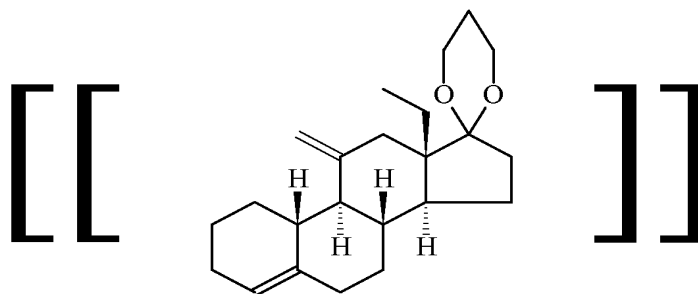
XIVa



Xva

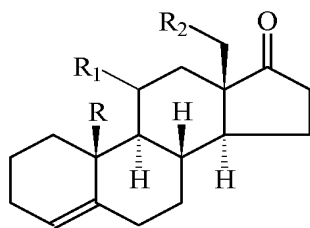


XVIa



XVIIa

16. (Original) A process for the preparation of a compound of formula



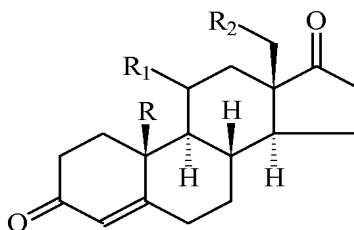
XIV

in which

R and R₂ represent H or CH₃, and

R₁ represents H or OH,

by regioselective reduction of the compound of formula



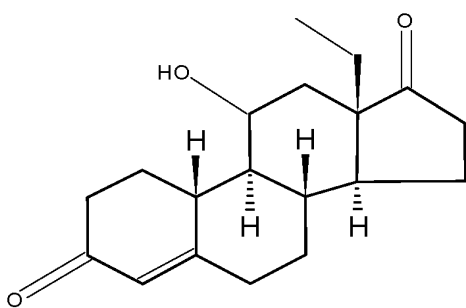
XII

in which R, R₁ and R₂ have the meanings reported above.

17. (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 16 ~~in which~~ wherein R=H, R₁=OH and R₂=CH₃.

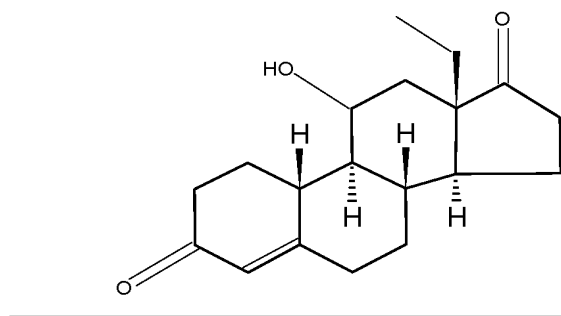
18. (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 16 in which said reduction is performed in the presence of an alkaline borohydride ~~including sodium borohydride~~, a strong organic acid ~~including trifluoroacetic acid~~ and a C₁-C₃ organic acid ~~including acetic acid~~ and in which said reduction is performed in an organic solvent selected from the group consisting of dichloromethane, tetrahydrofuran or diglyme, in which the ratio between the moles of borohydride and the moles of compound XIIa is between 8 and 2, in which trifluoroacetic acid and acetic acid are used in a ratio by volume from 2:1 to 1:2, and in which said reduction is performed with about 6 moles of sodium borohydride per mole of compound XIIa, trifluoroacetic acid and acetic acid in a ratio by volume of 1:1, in dichloromethane and at a temperature of reaction between 0°C and 25°C,

wherein compound XIIa is a compound of formula

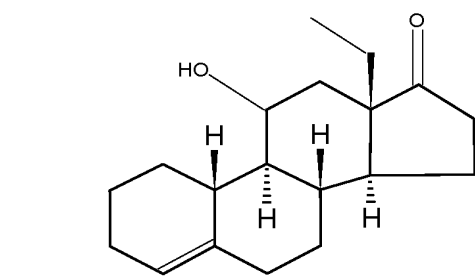


XIIa

19. (Currently Amended) A method of preparing Desogestrel comprising providing one or more compounds of formula

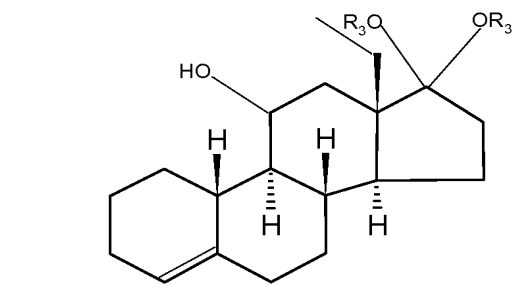


XIIa,



XIVa

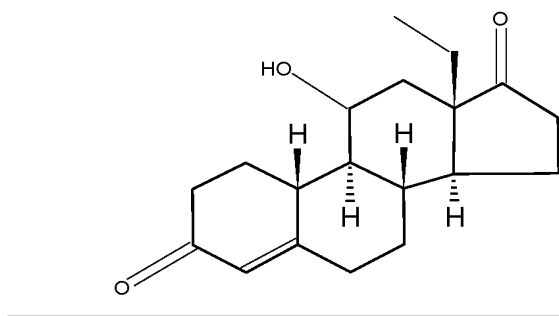
and



XV

as intermediates and reacting said intermediates to produce Desogestrel.

20. (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 17 in which said reduction is performed in the presence of an alkaline borohydride ~~including sodium borohydride~~, a strong organic acid ~~including trifluoroacetic acid~~ and a C₁-C₃ organic acid ~~including acetic acid~~ and in which said reduction is performed in an organic solvent selected from the group consisting of dichloromethane, tetrahydrofuran or diglyme, in which the ratio between the moles of borohydride and the moles of compound XIIa is between 8 and 2, in which trifluoroacetic acid and acetic acid are used in a ratio by volume from 2:1 to 1:2, and in which said reduction is performed with about 6 moles of sodium borohydride per mole of compound XIIa, trifluoroacetic acid and acetic acid in a ratio by volume of 1:1, in dichloromethane and at a temperature of reaction between 0°C and 25°C, wherein compound XIIa is a compound of formula



XIIa

21. (New) The process according to claim 2 in which said reduction is performed in an organic solvent comprising dichloromethane.
22. (New) The process according to claim 2 in which the ratio between the moles of borohydride and the moles of compound XIIa is between 5.5 and 6.5.
23. (New) The process according to claim 3 in which trifluoroacetic acid and acetic acid are used in a ratio by volume of 1:1.
24. (New) The process according to claim 10 in which the protection of the carbonyl group (b) is performed at a temperature of about 40°C.
25. (New) The process according to claim 18 wherein the alkaline borohydride comprises sodium borohydride.
26. (New) The process according to claim 18 wherein the strong organic acid comprises trifluoroacetic acid.
27. (New) The process according to claim 18 wherein the C₁-C₃ organic acid comprises acetic acid.
28. (New) The process according to claim 20 wherein the alkaline borohydride comprises sodium borohydride.
29. (New) The process according to claim 20 wherein the strong organic acid comprises trifluoroacetic acid.
30. (New) The process according to claim 20 wherein the C₁-C₃ organic acid comprises acetic acid.